

How Teachers Can Intervene With Gang-Involved Students

- 1 - Develop an Anti-Gang Environment in Your Classroom and School.** If your school does not have a policy regarding gang activity or dress, determine if current school policy will sufficiently cover gang incidents. If not, assist in getting your school policy updated and parents informed. Enforce school policies consistently and fairly, and make sure that all students understand them.
- 2 - Obtain the Latest Information on Gang Awareness.** Gangs are constantly changing. Obtain regular updates from your local law enforcement agency on the type of gang activity in your area. Learn the newest gangs in the area, their hangouts, graffiti, clothing trends, activities, rivals, etc.
- 3 - Share Gang Information with Local Law Enforcement.** Contact your local police department and request that they assign an officer to your school to act as a liaison between the school and the police department. (In many areas, school resource officers are assigned full-time in a school and are available to assist surrounding schools. Find out who that person is.) Meet with the officer on a regular basis and share your concerns.
- 4 - Make Frequent Contact with Parents of High-Risk Students.** Parents are often the last to know about their child's gang involvement. If you notice sudden changes in attitude, grades, and dress of a student, alert their parents. Never assume that the parent already knows and is doing nothing about it.
- 5 - Assign Mentors to Students Who Are Having Difficulty in School.** Many youths are drawn to gangs because it provides them with a support structure and feeling of belonging. Students who are struggling in school need to feel that they are successful at something even if it is committing crime. A mentor can give a student a feeling of importance--that someone cares about them.
- 6 - Learn About Community Resources Available in the Area For Students.** Teachers can often steer their students toward positive activities that can reduce their likelihood of becoming gang-involved. There are also many community resources available for families that are struggling with gang members in their family.
- 7 - Teach Kids Anti-Violence and Problem Solving Skills.** Many students will turn to gangs to solve problems for them or to provide protection. Teaching your students problem solving skills and behavioral skills training can reduce the number of violent incidents on campus. Students will also feel more in control and confident of their abilities to "stand alone." The need for a gang is reduced.
- 8 - Do Not Glorify Gang Activity, But Do Not Ignore It Either.** Students will often discuss recent gang activity among themselves and may glorify the gang members that are involved. While such discussions should be discouraged, it is helpful for youth to discuss the activity with the teacher serving as a facilitator so that the issue can be dealt with in a realistic manner and used as a learning experience for students.

Courtesy of the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office

<http://www.slsheriff.org/lawenforcement/investigations/metrogang/index.html>